Title

I ~~used to be~~ was a Schizophrenic

I was a Schizophrenic

# Madness in Memory

Sara K. Smith

"If you want to bring peace to the world, start walking in circles."

"A telepathic marvel," I thought, astounded at this unique experience.

No one else was present, yet I was distinctly aware of what the voice said. "How strange and wonderful! A new awareness came over me of a world where walking in circles would bring peace. A magic world.

"No, not in circles," I thought, "in ovals. Will that be as good?"

"Yes," came the answer.

I walked with confidence in that wholehearted uncritical way we walk thru our dreams. The thought that I was performing a ritual of an unbalanced state never entered my consciousness.

My legs became very tired but I walked around and around on the yellow hardwood floor making hundreds and hundreds of ovals in an action for peace. For several days I interrupted my walking only to cook meals or to go to bed.

Finally, completely exhausted, I thought, "Can I stop now?"

"Yes, that's enough," was the answer.

After serving my husband lunch, it slipped out of my my mind. I started to prepare his lunch again. Laughtingly, I told him that I had nearly served him two lunches.

Later in the day he said, "Do you think you would kill yourself or anybody?"

"After 14 years of marriage," I thought indignantly to myself. So I answered with some malice, "How do I know?"

In the doctors little office I answered his question by silently walking in a very small oval for him. He ran out to get another doctor. They both seemed quite upset but they said nothing to me about my condition.

In the waiting room at the county hospital my husband and I waited quite a long time. He said, "Why don't they come? I can't wait all day."

Anger rushed up in me because he didn't care about me even while I was waiting to be hospitalized. I said as an angry jest, "I'll throw this chair through the window, and they'll be here soon enough."

Still in jest I put my hands on the chair. But my husband, whitefaced and frantic, grabbed the chair and held it down. In rushed the attendant, ~~and~~ who led me off.

There was nothing in the green room but the white bed. A nurse came in and ~~taking~~ took all my clothes, rings, and purse, ~~she~~ but gave me no explaination.

She left me a hospital gown to put on.

When I had to go to the bathroom, I went to the door. It was locked. I tried it again. She had locked me in. I called the nurse, and waited and called again and again, but she didn't come. I had never been so cut off from people. Not knowing what to do in my isolation, I shouted at the top of my voice, "Nurse, I have to go to the bathroom." Driven by desperation when she didn't come at all, I pounded on the door . In the end I had to give up. Shaking, I sat on the edge of the bed.

Hours later when she did come, she chained my hands and feet to the bed and walked out, locking the door. In shock and terror I began to form the idea that I must have been seized by maniacs and might be in danger of my life.

I looked at my hands with desperate excitement. Around the wrists were heavy leather straps attached to six inches of chain wrapped in leather and fastened to the edge of the bed My ankles were chained so that I couldn't cross my legs to rest my muscles.

Having no choice, I wet the bed. Serene for the moment in the knowledge I had never done anything in my life to deserve the punishments that I was undergoing; I lay in the warm dampness. "Served her right to have to change wet sheets since she kept me chained, ~~locked in~~ and wouldn't bring a bed pan."

To say that I was terrified is not enough. I also was humiliated and angry by the chains and the locked door. My confused mind raced along imagining things to fit the happenings. Probably they were eagerly waiting to hear me rattle the chains and shout or scream in my misery. They must be sadists. So I lay there silently suffering from my own overstimulated imagination as well as the discomfort of not being able to move my hands or feet or to get in a comfortable position for 48 hours.

When the nurse came in with the meals, I was afraid to ask any of the questions that were in my mind. I know food was brought to me but to this day I don't remember anything about it.

After I had been in chains for about two days and nights, the nurse took them off. Passively I wondered, "Why had she put them on? Why did she take them off?" Although I thought a great deal about it, I had no idea. Nor did I have any assurance about what they might do next. How could I possibly avoid upsetting such irrational people whose captive I was. For my safety, I decided on a course of action: to continue to be polite, in fact to be extremely polite ~~whatever happened~~ no matter what happened, to agree with the attendants and above all keep my rebellious thoughts to myself and ask no questions. Confused as I was, I tried to follow this program.

The nurse gave me my clothes and opened the door for the first time in about a week . She took me across the hall to a much larger room which had about ten women in it. This was a relief after being locked in solitary confinment for so long.

"Get ready to see the judge today," said the nurse. I followed her to a large bedroom with bars on the high windows and a bare table. After two hours, a man in a brown suit came in and sat by the table. I looked at him. He was an average appearing man such as one might see commuting to work on the bus every day. He said nothing and I said nothing. Time passed.

"This certainly isn't a courtroom," I thought. "Is the man in the brown suit a judge?" I thought not, "No robes, no courtroom manner, and no legal papers. No he isn't a judge— just one of their gang."

After a long time, I said, "You may go now." And silently the judge left.

Standing in the parking area with my hands handcuffed together like a crimnal, I looked sharply for a clue. Was I being kidnapped or was I really being transported to the State Hospital as they told me. On the car license I found ~~one~~, no state insignia.

So it was a preparation to kidnap me. But I decided to see for sure what they would say about it, to give them a chance to explain themselves. I said, "This isn't a state car . There's no "E" on the license."

As if he were talking to a child the man said, "Would you rather go in a state car? I can take a state car if you'd rather."

His attitude didn't seem to be that of a kidnapper, but my distrust continued. Here I was in handcuffs. Why? Why was he giving me a choice? Politely I said, "That's all right, I don't mind."

A woman got in the back with me and sat down to my left. I wondered if she were a policewoman. Off we went. I carefully observed the route. It was in the general direction of the Napa State Hospital. I relaxed slightly. But handcuffs made it hard to sit at ease in a moving car. I couldn't prop myself with my arms. I studied the stony faced woman next to me. She was unhandcuffed. She sat stolidly beside me not speaking, not smiling, just looking straight ahead. She was a thin middleaged woman with ink blot hair. Although she was stern looking, it was in a self-enclosed way, apart from the world around her. On the other hand she didn't look like a crimnal accomplice. On we rode, the silence ~~was~~ broken only by the hum of the motor, the man in front, the two of us in

back. Were we both being kidnapped?

We came to a sign saying Napa State Hospital and pointing for a right turn. Past it we sped. This decided me. Alert and tense, I tried to plan my escape. We were not going to the hospital. We passed another sign pointing to the hospital turn off. My heart raced with excitement. How could I escape with handcuffs on? It was surprising how very little I coulddo without the use of separate arms. For an instant, I wondered what the kidnappers would do to me. Perhaps more torture or murder. Could I open the door and jump out? I was afraid to. The car was traveling too fast. I decided to risk a wreck and attack the driver. Then escape. It would have been simple to kick him on the head if I could prop myself with my arms. Throw myself down toward the floor, raise the level of my feet to get them closer to his head. Not a moment to lose. Throwing myself down and my legs forward, kicking up as I did, I managed to land a slight blow on the side of his head.

Immediately he pulled over to the side of the road, turned around and said mildly, "Now don't do that again."

At last I had a bit of certain knowledge. This was no kidnapper but a very considerate person. I knew then that I was not being kidnapped. I was really being taken to the State Hospital. They really thought me insane. The other woman still sat sternly beside me. For her nothing had

happened. It was years before I realized she was also a patient of a different sort.

The blackness of night was in my heart. My mind was a battleground of nightmares. The real night world around was no better. I lay in the dormitory of an insane asylum. Fearfully I waited for the wild-haired women to come in. What would they do? Would they attack me? What chance would I have with my 5 feet 4 inch build, my 105 pounds?

The greatest irrational fear of my life had suddenly materilized. ~~multiplied~~. I was surrounded by nearly 100 crazy women. How terrified I had been in my childhood by the thought of one crazy face looking in the window!

The light shone brightly in my face as I lay there. There was a bed on either side of ~~mine~~ mine. While I slept they might sneak over to strangle me. Who would stop them? "No one. My screams would be cut off and that would be it."

"Go to sleep. Go to sleep,now," said the voice. "You are safe. At last I have you where you're perfectly safe."

"Shut up. Shut up. Icanʼt stand listening to you and I think you are a ~~liar~~ liar," I thought back.

"I can't shut up. Why do you listen? Why don't you just turn it off like every one else does?" insisted the voice

I knew now that I was no longer in control of my ownmind. The humiliation of this went deep. The voice talked on mercilessly. There was no way to stop it except sleep. I waited the arrival of the woman who might murder me. I was in a paralysis of fear. At least I would stay awake and make an effort to save my life if attacked. A woman came in end took off her clothes as I lay in pretended sleep nearby. She switched off the light and went to bed. Others came in, talked and went to bed. No one noticed me.

What a grueling medieval dream of dungeons and fatal tournaments violated my sleep. I groaned under the agony of medievil tortures. It was such a remarkable dream, so different from all the dreams that I have had in my life, that I believed it was sent to me from another type of mind than my own. It was heavy and Germanic in style.

I thought of my life as ended. My hopes of ever reaching fruition as an artist were over. Here, away from my child, surrounded by maniacs, my life would drag on to its final end years in the future. How could I deny there really was a voice if they should ask me? It wasn't imaginary. I wasn't hearing a "voices". This was real. There was no escaping it. They would never let me go if they knew that I thought the voice was real.

I saw little of the unkempt hair, ill-fitting state dresses, and unhappy faces surrounding me. Distractedly, I wandered through the hall feeling out of place. One of the green doors was ajar. I saw a gaunt old woman lying there naked Her great yellow knee bones bulged above pallid legs shrunken to the narrow bones, Her black mouth hung loose in her emaciated face. Was she dead or had she been tortured to uncondiousness? In a flash of recognition I knew this place as a concentration camp. At last I knew what had happened to me. But I never knew we had them. The American public doesn't know this. In the next room a woman whimpered and talked to herself.

I felt my resolve hardening. Somehow I must live through this. Someday I must get out to tell this story. In the right time at the right place I must tell it and warn the others.

Back in the living room the radio was talking on and on. I walked over to it and turned it off. A moment of quiet for myself, but not for long. I sat down in a red plastic leather chair as another patient went over to turn it on again. The chairs were all made for the comfort of six foot men and I couldn't find a place of comfort on the whole ward except the beds at night.

I asked the nurse if it was all right to go into the yard. I was looking for an escape. Out in the sunlight I saw the ten foot white stucco wall all around the enclosure. Not being athletic wasn't any handicap ; nobody could scale it. .....Oh, darling why do you want to leave when we're just getting acquainted. Don't call me that..... I felt my mind soothed and lulled by the endearing term. I rolled my eyes around trying to escape into sight. The volley ball bounded in my direction. Furious with myself for reacting to the voice sensually, I found I couldn't avoid it.....I'm the doctor on the ward thinking to you....Shan't I call you my little sweetheart when we've been so much to each other. We are very close you know. You're a doll. From now on I'll always call you doll. Just a beautiful little doll. I'll do anything for you. You're the love of my life..... Leave me in peace. I was trying to get rid of the voice by keeping quiet. It went on never stopping for answers.

With triumph I managed to think of escape again in spite of the voice. There was a bench in the yard. If I stood it on its end I would be high enough to get on top of the fence Then I could drop down on the outside and be free of locks and walls. What then after I escaped? The law would be after me, hunting me down. MENTAL PATIENT ESCAPES FROM STATE HOSPITAL.

Fear everywhere because I was loose. Legally I wouldn't be abl to keep my child. Clear thinking along with a voice in the mx mind is not possible. But just finding a way to escape abated my most extreeme fears of what they might do to me next. END First part S.K.S.

Wetting my comb and pulling it through my wavy hair, I looked in the long mirror with so many womens faces in it. I took my cigarette down from the ledge under the mirror for a long drag. The mirrors edge was marked with lipstick ↑cigarette burns above I saw my face, It looked xxold and thin,old for 45, my beauty was gone. My eyes felt strange. I tried to see if my x pupils were contracted or dilated but I couldn't tell. My eyes wouldn't focus.

I heard my name called. The technician was calling a list of names. I put my comb a way and walked down the hall to this plump little woman in white uniform. She looked at us out of round eyes in a happy face and said, "You are going tox get photographed and see the doctor today. Line up in twos." In twos we marched off.

I marched as if to a war against my way of life. What is more personal than walking as an individual. Deprived of my solitary ways, I lived in a regimented mass of creatures. Descisions were taken away from me. Where I walked, when I walked even how fast I walked was not for me to decide anymore. At the photographers office we didn't talk; we sat and waited and smoked. At the doctors off ice we waited again and smoked some more.

"We're in the parking lot. We're going to get you out of here". Droned the voice .

Listening to the lady doctor and the voice at the same time was difficult. She asked me many questions and wrote down my answers. Finally came the question that I most feared.

"Do you hear voices?"

Faintly but stubbornly I corrected her, "There is a voice." All my courage and honesty was in my answer.

She flickered her eyes shut for a while. I thought she was in a trance. This terrified me. I tied it in with a frightening experience I had had a year before, when I was hypnotized against my will while listening to an East Indian lecturer. I jumped to the conclusion that he now had her under his power. (I had heard my first voice during a pause in his lecture. I thought it was from his mind. The fluttering eyelids of the woman next to me who was in a trance before I was had warned me that he was hypnotizing the audience,)

Back on the ward I tried to come to an understanding of my situation. Instead of answers I found uncertainty. Was I really psychotic or had my husband railroaded me in? He certainly had committed me when I refused to committ myself. Was I psychotic? Strange things were happening to me. I wasn't sure. What had I done to deserve committment? There

was my remark about throwing the chair through the window, ~~I~~ but I hadn't meant to do it. I had laughted myself right ~~in~~ into the State Hospital. Nobody else had realized that I was joking. Did the East Indian lecturer have anything to do with this voice Was he in fact the source of the voice? Or was it from more than one person? I had found out by observing the content of the voice that the source of the voice knew a lot about me. It knew what I was looking at , listening to, and a lot about my past. Perhaps they were together, my husband and this East Indian. Although I was not sure that they were the cause, I hated them both for the agony I had endured. I just felt they would do that. At this moment, I confessed to myself I wanted to kill them for putting me in this hell. So the feeling of virtue that I had been unconcious of for a life time was suddenly gone. I was concious of the lack of it. I thought of a mystic experience I'd had several years before. This helped me to feel better.

"Sara Smith," came the call from the office door. "Your husband's here to see you."

Never good at communication he stood there looking awkwardly at me, his hands at his side, no smile on his face.

"I hate you." I said violently.

He had brought me my paints.

Freed from the agony of evil, of disturbed patients, of radio, and the routine life of the ward, I began to paint. My former concepts about painting were gone. I really didn't care what anyone thought anymore. What difference did it make what my former style was like. I was free from all that stuff too. I had finally found the place where I could do what I wanted to at the moment and I did. New forms emerged from my brush, new smoky color spread over the paper. My life would not be wasted here. I was allowed to paint. I liked my work.

The ward doctor was a very handsome brunette with the profile of a classic hero. He sat in his office observing the patients even more often the ladies observed him. It was a handicap to be so handsome. "He loves you," said the voice romantically. "He just doesn't want the other ladies to know. It would make them jealous." I knew that was not true. I still tried desperately to keep the true and the false separate. But I responded sensually.

The doctor walked into the bedroom where I was painting.

"See," Said the voice, "I told you. He loves you."

The doctor said, "They have decided to give you shock treatments."

"How can this be avoided?" I asked.

"It can't" He said.

Soon after that a group of us were transfered upstairs to ward A8. What a horribleand sickening smell on this new ward! Yet the ward was spotlessly clean. The vynl tile floors shone. All patients were forced to take one bath a week. I decided that it must have been the shock patients that gave off that foul odor.

Every day new patients were coming on the ward. They walked around helplessly confused in the unfamiliar surroundings. "Lost souls in limbo" I thought. One in particular caught my attention. She was Chinese. Around her neck was a red scar where she had tried to decapitate herself. The loss of a boy baby had been more than she could bear. We called her Mary. She settled in a corner with her knitting unable to speak to anyone. She spoke no English. I went over to her chair. She turned a deceptively calm face toward me. "Hello, Mary," I said and then slowly, "How are you?" I tried to get her to repeat it after me but she giggled and shyly refused to repeat it ~~after me~~. All day she sat there locked in with the rest of us unable to talk. How could she ever get well?

One day as we all sat around the visitors room, in came a group of new patients. As if in answer to prayer, one of them was Chinese. We all held our breaths. Would she speak ~~Chines~~ Chinese? Would it be the Cantonese that Mary spoke? Or would they both be unable to communicate with anyone? Mary

spoke. The stranger answered in beautiful sing-song Cantonese We sat back in our chairs cheered for a brief moment. They chattered away and giggled Chinese style. "Inscrutable orientals. " said the voice.

The voice steadily assured me that I wouldn't have any shock treatments. It repeated its assurances so often that like a victim of an advertising campaign, I began to be influenced against my better judgment. Everyday when the shock list was called out my name wasn't on it.

Horrified and indignant, I watched the shocked patients stagger back from the electric treatments in a stupor with their red rimmed eyes no longer able to recognize their friends on the ward, their memories gone. Then I heard my name read off the list. They were going to put my mind to death along with 25 others.

"This is the end. How can I possibly endure it? Will I have the courage to face it with dignity?" I wondered.

In twos we lined up to walk to the treatment room. Two techs, as we called the technicians, came with us. Down a block long pale green hall we marched. Sitting in our hospital robes waiting our turn, we smoked. We weren't allowed to carry matches so we had to ask the tech for a light or get one from a lighted cigarette. We were warned to remove bobby pins and all other metal from our head to avoid -

being badly burned by the electric current. I thought about putting up a fight. Maybe that would get me out of it. Claire was called and she started to go. Then she let out a scream and shouted "I'm not going to take them. You can't make me!"

Expertly 4 techs grabbed a flaling arm or a kicking leg ~~xxx~~ eachand carried her off still screaming to the shock room. Where her screams were suddenly cut off.

I was next to the last ~~x~~ one called. I felt that if these patients were able to walk to the room I would make it there. I stood up quietly and walked in to the shock room. I climbed up the table and lay down. In an instant the intern had put ~~xx~~ metal clamps on either side of my head and I was in a state of unconsciousness.

Stunned by the first treatment, I managed to walk into the bedroom to continue my painting. Every afternoon I painted. I was finishing a large colorful abstract watercolor with a black ~~xxxxxx~~ background. ~~Every afternoon I painted.~~ I was ~~finishing~~x so confused by the treatment that I felt like collapsing on the bed. But I still had enough memory left to be determined that this treatment no matter how frightful would not stand in the w way of my painting. The will to paint was all I had left of my

way of life. It was an escape from the life of the ward. While painting, I could turn my back on the censorship of letters, the terrible clink of the techs keys in the door locking us in from the rest of the world as animals are locked in a zoo. The whole humiliating process of cattle-like regimentation that we all suffered. Theives who took advantage of our confusion to steal our clothes. Then the ever present mass contact with very ill patients.

Before I was in a hospital, I had always supposed that mental patients were imaginative and behaved something like a character out of Lewis Carroll. But if someone had stopped the first 85 ladies they met on the street that was our ward. Of fantasy they had none.

However, I had found some patients that I liked. There was a woman reporter on the ward that was being given no treatment. She was still her original self. She loved to play scrabble. She thought it was good for me to play and I played with her and her friends quite often in the evenings.

~~There was~~ A Nazi German doctor ~~as~~ was a patient on the ward. She was outstandingly cruel in her remarks to the other patients This was very easy for her because she was very intelligent. I thought she was very beautiful in a Rubensesque way, but I could not bear her cruel ways. She wanted to be friendly with me . It seemed to me that basicly ~~we~~ the patients were equal in hardships. We were all locked in together and all accused of insanity. And we should take some thought for each

not behave in a class conscious + cruel fashion as she did.

other. I prefered the "Queen of Kearney Street", a little ~~xkx~~ street walker who kept in practice by airing her thin charms in the hall. Arching her feet and walking along there in her stilted pitiful little walk, she was avoided by most of the other patients. But, when I sat by her ~~I noticed~~ she avoided me to my surprise

At first the disintigration of my mind was not noticible. But as the treatments continued, it became more marked. I used to wonder why things seemed to go awry with me because I couldn't femember that I couldn't remember. When I would worry about my loss of memory the other patients would remind me that I had lost my memory from shock treatments, that it would come back. It was very much like having a senile mind.

There were other severe effects of the shock treatments. My menstruation had stopped during these treatments. Convultions that I suffered during the last treatment broke my back. This was discovered by ex-ray after I had left the ~~xx~~ hospital.

This last treatment was unusually severe. I came to walking down the block long hall with a patient on either side of me proping me up. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ Although I was not sane as a result of the shock treatments, the avenues of my personality had been destroyed. I was floating around in vagueness. Scarsely conscious as we unlocked and entered the door of our ward, I thought of my painting. By habit, I managed to try to open the door of the bedroom to paint. But it was locked. Stubbornly I staggered over to a tech and asked her to unlock

it. I reminded her that the doctor had given me permition to paint there. She grumbled and stopped what she was doing to open the door for me. I went in and looked at the painting My eyes wouldn't focus on it, my head was spinning, I couldn't think at all. I fell across the bed like a wounded beast. I couldn't paint. The doctor with her shock treatments had won, but she didn't know it. With my back broken, lacking a memory, and confused, I still willed to be myself with all my will. She will never know she won I thought with ~~some~~ slight satisfaction.

2nd cut here

A white-haired hunchback was gravely dancing with a tall moron. A simple smile was on her ruddy face. Her buttocks flapped as she jigged around. She was having one grand time and so was he. No critical thoughts ever crossed her mind about him. Few men ever have the opportunity to hold a woman in their arms who has never had any inhibitions. ~~Her loose movement spoke of no inhibitions.~~ No one paid any special attention to this extraordinary couple.

This dance was the one blissful event of the week for everyone. The ladies in shapeless state dresses, petticoats showing, buttons missing, belts hanging by their sides, danced closely in the embraces of men also wearing state clothes that were ill-fitting. Raucous old ladies tottered around the floor with vivid rouge and lipstick smeared on their faces. I thought of Toulouse Lautrec's whore house paintings.

One tall negro fell down in an epilectic seizure. His white partner stooped over him. The crowd cleared in a circle around him.

"Get a tech." said someone.

Some of the techs who lined the walls had seen it and were on their way over. One called the ambulance. The patient was carried off on a strecher.

My partner held me very close.

"Youfre trembling " he said.

I felt some security in this man's embrace. His series of shock treatments was over too. He took me over to the end of the hall where we could smoke to offer me a cigarette. Quietly he produced matches to light it. Rules or no rules this man carried his own matches. With a rebel gesture he handed me a book of matches. I looked carefully at the cover which had a single American beauty rose on it. The voice was weaving a romance about the cover's symbolism. In this packed area where the techs couldn't see, he caught me in a tight embrace and kissed me. Nearby were other couples smoking.and smouching in the half dark.

A short stocky patient with a broken nose came up. My partner introduced me to him. Joe was a flyweight boxing champion. His footwork was light and rythmical on the dance floor. He told me his ex-wife was there too. Later I saw them together giving each other a deep kiss for the

duration of a dance.

Here were the outcasts from creation. Yet most found their mates in misery. Herewere extreme individuals who were past the understanding of the rest of the world in that limbo beyond reason. But the male and female were joined here by the dance. For this brief evening they were not alone anymore.

A half-wit circled the room greeting everyone with a Buddy Poppy in his lapel and the words on his lips, "I'm Elmer." A great grin spread between his large protruding ears.

"Hello Elmer,"we replied.

Some dancers nearby were very colorful with cast off clothing that was chosen for its bright color never mind the fit. Oddly I was enjoying myself in this bohemian gathering, when ~~Helga~~ Hilda, the German patient, came over to me and said.

"They should all be exterminated."

I could scaresly believe that even a Nazi could stand on the dance floor herself a patient and say they should be exterminated. I was too shocked to answer. I wanted in no way to be with her not even on the same side of the room. I crossed the room.

She stood alone near the orchestra for the rest of the evening. Beautiful as she was no one would dance with her. I thought "This is a mystical unity of the patients against her Nazi viewpoint."

As for myself, I found that the great suffering that I had

undergone had broken down the barriers between myself and others here. I had learned to care for Elmer, the half-wit and to miss him when he missed a dance. ~~He~~ Even Elmer was not expendible.

The day started at 6:00 am when the techs opened the door of the bedroom and shouted their morning greeting. Active, extraverted, they soon returned. There was no refusing ~~that~~ their call. It was no use to point out sulkily that there was nothing to do and no place to go so why not sleep. Off they ripped the covers. Like ~~an~~ army sargents the techs got everyone up. Putting on my dark blue cordoroy state bathrobe, over my sack-shaped nighty, I went in the wash room .

"Hi, Millie," I said, not with cheer but just ~~routinly~~ routinely, spurting water between my teeth immediately afterward.

"Good morning, Sari, She replied, soaping her ears. "Did you sleep well?"

"Oh, yes, I always sleep. Did you?" As I tried to comb my hair with three faces bobbing in front of me in the mirror while she answered that she never slept at all. Then she became self-absorbed again. How white my hair has become since I've been in. Vaguely, I wandered out unaware that breakfast came next. I had forgotten that there was a next. But on walking down the hall, I saw a line for the dining room and joined it.

Fifteen minutes later I was in the dining room where I picked up a tray and a knife and fork. Every

morning we had hard boiled eggs, cereal, toast and milk or coffee. My taste in food was simple. I liked ~~xxxxxxx~~ hard boiled eggs. I put my tray down at the table where Millie was drinking her morning coffee.

"When did she go to conference?" Millie was saying with a great deal of nervous animation.

"She passed conference yesterday. And she's going home today as soon as her husband picks her up." said the friend.

I listened with relief. Some day you do go home. But there was still the voice. The voice was mockingly with me. The three months that I could stay on that ward were nearly up. Then if I didn't go home the rumor had it that I would be moved to a strange ward, where I had no friends, to remain for a year or less. Although normally a talkative person, I was inarticulate with ~~frust~~ frustration and boredom. I tried to think of something to say to Millie. I really thought her a most interesting person. But I had been on the ward with her for months. Nothing happened in my world that didn't happen in hers. I felt cut off from the normal ~~xxxxxx~~ sources of conversation as well as confused from the ~~xx~~ shock treatments. "How is the coffee?" I offered.

"Ump" Said Millie making a face, "the usual."

After breakfast I walked down the hall past all the ~~xx~~ symetrically placed bedroom doors, now locked. Here was a

choice. I could sit in the visiters room or in the day room where the TV set was. Avoiding the TV program, I sat in the visiters room as always and looked for the morning newspaper. Sure enough the tech had brought the newspaper. Millie trotted off with half of it to get herself some instant coffee with hot tap water. A minor headline caught my eye. SENATORS STAND PAT ON WATER. What a contrast to Jesus I thought. Prompted by the voice , I looked at the clock. It was 8 to 8:00. Whenever the voice prompted me to look at the clock, it was ten to ten or two to two or some such combination. I had become accustomed to the fact that the voice knew the time without seeing the clock.

I got up and walked past the day hall. As a green door passed my vision, I heard the TV sing out, "What's behind the green door?"
This question pierced me with its simultanaity to my act as if fate had asked it. "Patients, " I thought, who really knows them and what goes on inside them.

The ward Doctor passed. I said, "Hello." to her. But she looked at me without a change of expression and as always didn't speak. This left me feeling invisible as usual. Why didn't she speak?

"Mail call, " shouted a nearby tech. A crowd gathered for their portion of news from the outside. "Sara Smith". I reached out my hand for a thin envelope with a childish scrawl running down the page.

"Dear Mama,

My polbywogs got eaten by a turtle. I miss you. I hope you come home soon.

Your son,

Tony"

There was a border of kisses in the form of "X"s and hugs in the form of "O"s.

I wondered if I could get out any faster by acting sane. I spent a great deal of time wondering what was the sane way to take life inside an asylumn. Should one one be cheerful? That seemed foolishly out of place. But the important question was how did Dr. ~~Sizler~~ MERK think it should be played? I looked at her sitting in her office She was a thin little woman with glasses. The adjective for her was meager. But she was sane. Why were some of the patients on their way home? What was the sanity factor they had to offer? It did seem to me that they left sooner if they were more extraverted. I felt bleak about that. Would they ever think me sane? All my life my individual preferences and behavior had incited the exclamation "You're crazy!" or ""You nut!". Now how could I drop all my individuality to be like

the others. I watched the techs closely to see their sanity in action so that I could imitate it. But I came to the private conclusion they weren't so sane. Yet they were free to go.

How much time had passed? It was 8:08. Had time stopped? I took no pleasure in the toys offered by a mercantile civilization. They were all for selling. Selling or buying meant nothing to me in my present plight. The TV flickering over in the corner held no dramatic or artistic interest. The magazines on the davenport with their pat love stories and advertizements didn't invite me. There was nothing beautiful there. I opened my wallet to the pictures of Tony. He was swinging and grinning up at the camera. He was spending the summer with a friend who had two sons. "He's all right," I thought. "How little I am missed."

I'll go for a walk in the corridor. Millie had already left for a walk on the grounds as she had gotten a "P" card. I was in line for one as soon as they thought me able. I walked along between bare walls of ugly proportions. At the end I looked past bars out the window. There were still green leaves on the big trees, well cut lawns underneath. But there were bars. I turned away. The whole horror of being locked in slipped from my vague conciousness. I just felt vacant and mamed. I've had shock treatments I remembered that's what's the matter with me. If I can just remember this. I walked

to the toilet. Carefully I inspected the seats and picked one that wasn't soiled.
I had the job of sweeping out the corridor. That finished, I went into the ironing room. Several women were drinking coffee. One was ironing her state dress. I walked out again. As I walked down the hall I suddenly became aware of a deep feeling of rejection. I realized for the first time consciously that my mother never really loved me for myself and I felt that rejection now. I had never been the kind of person that my little Sourthern mother could understand and love. Perhaps had loved me in her way. But I was a rebel, this she could never understand. Was this why I was here?

There was a long line in the hall. It was still some time until lunch ,but , having nothing else to do everyone stood in line. I wanted a cigarette but my last pack was gone. When I told the tech , she offered me one of hers. Then reluctantly feeling rather foolish, I joined the line.

After a lunch of beans and weiners, we had a nap for an hour.

At 2:30 we were lead off by the tech to Occupational Therapy. "Busy work", I thought. Inorder not to appear unco-operative, I went to work weaving a pot holder. The The colors of the materials were terrible. Finally I found a yellow that went with a red fairly well. Did I prefer this or sitting on the ward? Vaguely , I preferred this. The girl next to me was a call girl. Rumor had it that she picked up $65- a day to meet her heroine expenses. I was grieved by the agonies of her life. One of the hardships of living here was learning the heart-breaking details of the others lives.

Sara K. Dale



The afternoon dragged slowly along. Dinner time came. We ~~eate~~ ATE our cabbage and pork chops with ice-cream for desert. At eight o'clock I begged to go to bed but bed time was nine o'clock. Until nine we had to sit up tired or not.

ENDpart 3

When I was to be transfered to another ward, Miss Goodwin told me that Doctor Merk wanted a painting to remember me by. I was furious that this woman who never spoke to me and had given me all those shock treatments against my will should have the nerve to ask for a painting. But I was afraid to refuse her. She could decide in favor of more shock treatments also when I could go to conference to decide when I could go home. Speechless with rage, I handed Dr. Merk a little scrap of paper with paint on it.

"Ogden Cottage", had an ominous sound of ancient black magic like something out of Beowolf, like a swamp that witches live in, or like an ogre's den. It was so impressively ugly ~~t~~ that I wrote the following about it while I was living there.

I don't recall ever seeing one place that combined so many features of uglyness. In the language of philosophy, Ogden Cottage is, and in so far as it is , is ugly in the language of art. The TV room assails my senses as a whole, its quietly inharmonious aspect is as complete in the least detail as the reverse of an impression of the Taj Mahal. All the colors are harsh but weak. The furniture of worn plastic upholstery on chrome could have been from a cat-house of the ~~thirtiesx~~ forties. ( The bedrooms in regular rows down the hall re-enforce this effect.) Garishly placed against a stark orange-pink wall was the bright dark green fireplace.

By it are two lopsided white baskets with huge looped handles the rim bent like an Aussie hat from World War II (with a state number plate and Ogden Cottage tag) , two lamps with red and gold bands on the shades as well as state number plates, a Wong tree of mountain mahogany coated with pink enamel ~~xxxxxxx~~ with pastel Kleenex flowers attached to the tips of the twigs complete with its state number plate. Hanging by the windows are curtains of a lively blue and lavender print. The floor is a dark sea-green with glossy black base-boards shining against the pink wall. In the hallway as if carrying out the theme of the TV room are three of the most hideous amateur oil paintings that exist. They are so large that it is not possible to overlook them. Loud colors and harsh technique attacked me as I sat smoking. A patient had painted them. Uneasily, I wondered what the Doctor could be like. Only a witch could endure such a place.

The Doctor lived up to my anticipation during the first week. Without ever seeing me, she ordered me to take Thorazine, a tranquilizing drug, with a wide range of side effects. Drugged by the pills, I fell asleep. When I awakened, my legs felt paralized. I could move them only in the most general and awkward fashion. My nose was full of blood. I staggered to my feet never doubting that the pills had given me a stroke. As it was night, I went for help to the techs room where they congregated to drink coffee and chat while the patients slept. My brain reeled. I opened my mouth to ask for a Doctor,but my tongue just turned over in my mouth and no words came out. I gurgled helplessly. Two techs sprange to my side, braced me under the arms, and started leading me back to bed. "Go to sleep and sleep it off." They said. No Doctor was called.

I woke up remembering that I had had a stroke during the night.

I asked if I could see the doctor. I was told to put my name on the list. After several hours of waiting, I went in to see Dr. Mill who was substituting for Dr. Sizler, the regular ward doctor. After hearing my description of what happened to me, Dr. Mill ordered me off thorazine.

When Dr. Sizler came back on the ward and heard what had happened to me, she ordered me back on the thorazine. Fearing another stroke (I learned years afterward that I had not had a stroke but a reaction to the thorazine), I decided not to take it at any cost. I was convinced that Dr. Sizler was going to murder me wheither on purpose I did not know. I made up my mind to lie to the tech about it. I had a lifetime habit of telling the truth, but now I intended to lie to save my life. "Better be good at it," I thought. "These techs have seen every thing."

"Line up for your medicines," bellowed Miss Goodwin, the tech that had been a sargent in the WACs. I didn't twitch a muscle. After all the pills were given out, I heard Smith roared out as if from a bulls mouth. Quickly I got up and walked to the medicine room "What do you want ?" I asked co-operatively "You didn't take your pills" "Oh, didn't Dr Sizler tell you tell you that she took me off of them?" I said hoping by the question to put some of the coloration of truth in my lie. "No" said Miss Goodwin. I turned and walked out. Now if she didn't check with the doctor, I was in the clear. She didn't.

Amoung the women from A8 who had come on this ward with me was Hilda still trying to force me to talk to her. I woke up one night from a torturous dream that I thought she had sent me from her cruel mind. During

the afternoon rest period she came to the foot of my bed and stood there silently staring me in the eye. Behind her, the bleak empty corridor. As she stared, tension built up. She was determined to force me to speak. I was determined not to. The tension became unbearable. "You are obstructing my view of the corridor." I said. She flushed and walked off. I thought it a draw . She had forced me to speak, but she wasn't pleased with the result.

Revolt was brewing at our breakfast table. It was a great round table where we were seated permnantly. The plan was for these confused sick people from different walks of life to form one big family. Back to back with the fatest lady at our table sat an enormous lady at the next table. There wasn't room for both. I stood up while our fat lady pushed past me and heaved her bulk into the chair. The other one was already seated. Their chairs were touching. Any movement of one joggled the other. Tension rose. They turned and snarled at each other offering threats in even exchange. Moving uneasily to oneside of my chair, I stared tensely at the packaged dry breakfast food that sat infront of me for the eighth day in a row. With a swift movement, I picked it up and slambed it down in the center of the table. Slowly, all the other patients slapped their packages down. The table was stacked with unopened packaged food. The revolt had broken out but not where I had expected it! That was the last time we were served packaged breakfast food.

I had worried for sometime about what I would do if another patient should jump me. In the restroom all by myself I found out. A sullen young girl with her hair hung across her face came in the door just as I was going out. An ugly look came over her face, her lower lip jutted out in a pout. She raised her clenched fist, and said,"I'm going to hit you."

I looked directly up into her eyes and said firmly, I can hit too." But I let my arms hang limp at my sides. Quietly, I walked on. Outside I found myself shaking.

The voice continued but it was intermittant now. As I sat and smoked in the hall which was the only place we were allowed to smoke, two black girls came toward me. The voice said, "Nigger, nigger, nigger." I said nothing. But the two girls turned and walked off in the other direction. I was horrorfied. I was convinced that they had heared it. Did they think I was a racist? I suffered because for twenty years I had fought for black rights, And that was a word I had never used. But I couldn't stop the voice from chanting it in my mind. I sweated. If only they couldn't hear it.

Gradually the voice ceased. I was better. Christmas

was vacation time for every one that was at all well. I was notified that I would be allowed to go home for 5 days. My husband drove me silently out into the world that I hadn't seen for 6 months. Driving across the California hills to Berkeley , I was seeing the world for the first time. It was thrillingly beautiful. The fresh greens of nature contrasted with the harsh greens of the ward. The vast sky overhead contrasted with the limited rooms I had been accoustomed to. I was too happy to speak. My husband grumbled about the driver in front who was going too slow and wouldn't move over. I felt shock that anyone who was free in a beautiful world would grumble about anything. My son seemed older and more withdrawn.

There were all the bright flowers, the geraniums, the the fusias, and nasturtiums . The dog jumped up on me and licked my hands. I had forgotten what a bad housekeeper I had been,but walking into the house reminded me. It was still the same sloppy old house. I was too habituated to doing nothing to tackle the house. I was used to sitting in a chair. I began to feel tired. I sat in the livingroom and stared out the window. "No bars." Ithought. I looked for the nail sissors. The clippers on the ward left ragged nails. Our files had been confiscated.

My husband was not glad to have me home. But then he seldom seemed glad about anything. I was in a very passive mood

after so much suffering, his sulleness was just one more thing. My son was a little hostile too. I guessed that he felt rejected because I had been gone for sucha long time.

My husband was cooking Christmas dinner. He prided himself on his cooking. He carefully basted the bird while I watched. I decided to treat him as he had treated me. For fourteen years he had never complimented me on anything. So when the exquisite meal was served, I inhibited the impulse to complement him and said nothing about the meal at all.

Dry-eyed , I rode back to the hospital. What kind of report would my husband give them? He said, "I have something to tell you."

"What ?", I said. One thing was sure nothing he could tell me would make me feel worse than going back to the hospital.

"I've found someone else. " He said.

"Do you sleep with her ?" I asked.

"Yes." he said.

~~Dry-eyed, I rode back to the hospital.~~

After a month, I was called to conference. I sat outside the conference room in a straight backed chair for 4 hours waiting my turn to present my case to the panel of psychiatrists and social workers who would decide my fate. Would I be free to go or not? I had nothing to do but worry about the outcome of this interview. By the time I

was called I was both tired and tense. There were 20 or so staff people in the room.

"What caused you to become ill?" asked the doctor in charge.

"I was hypnotized. " I said, regretting that the story they were prompting me to unfold was so bizarre.

"Who hypnotized you?" asked one of them.

"Krishnamurti." I replyed, my hopes of getting out sinking lower.

"Who is he?"

"He's a mystic who lectures on self-knowledge." I said getting more involved in matters that were totally unfamiliar to this group.

"Why did you want him to hypnotize you?"

"I didn't. I was terrified of hypnotism. But it happened inspite of me." This was a true experience but against the beliefs of psychology. They thought a person could not be hypnotized against his will.

"Tell us about it."

"We were gathered under the oak trees in a little natural theater in Ojai. About 500 of us waiting for Krishnamurti to appear. When he did, I was relieved to see that he was dressed in slacks and a Hawaiian shirt. Nothing of the conventional Swami about him. He was a lithe dark man an intellegent slightly cynical expression. He talked in a

very slow monotonous voice. As I watched the light and shade from the trees began to slip slowly and evenly from side to side on his head. Looking closer, I saw he was weaving slightly from side to side like a penduluum with the most even movement. It seemed hardly possible for a man to move like that.

Suddenly I realized that he was hypnotizing us. I glanced in alarum at the girl I had come with. Her eyes were rolled up and flickering. She was already in a trance! Just as I was going to stand up and scream, I was aware of a Satanic spirit's presence. It was the most loathsome thing I have ever encountered. After this shock I lost conciousness. When I came too, I was still sitting in the same position on the grass."

I had told them. Told them the truth. I felt better somehow. But I was still terribly shaken from this verbal review that awful experience. with the unknown and supernatural.

The doctor said, "That is a systematic delusion."

I said nothing and looked respectful. With that I was dismissed.

I could not conceal my amazement when Miss Goodwin told me several days later that I had passed conference.

As soon as they could find a place for me to go to, I was free to go.

The last days were the hardest to bear. Finally the day came for my cousin and his wife to pick me up. My confidence in people was so broken that I wondered wheither they would really come. Perhaps they wouldn't show up.

They drove me across the countryside to their place in Walnut Creek . There was a little house in back where I could be to myself. My husband brought my painting table and an electric plate to cook breakfasts on. My son came out on the weekends. Gradually, during the year I spent there, I began to come back into a world I thought lost forever.